

Chlamydia

(*Chlamydia trachomatis*)

Disease Fact Sheet Series

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacteria called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. It is the most commonly reported STD in the state.

Who gets chlamydia infection?

Anyone who is sexually active can get chlamydia, but those at greater risk include:

- Sexually active adolescents
- Persons diagnosed with any STD
- Persons with a sex partner diagnosed with any STD
- Persons with more than one sex partner
- Persons with a new sex partner

How is chlamydia spread?

Chlamydia is usually spread by genital sexual contact, but chlamydia can also infect the throat, rectum and eyes. Babies can get a chlamydia infection during birth if the mother has this infection.

What are the signs and symptoms of chlamydia infection?

The majority of individuals may experience no symptoms at all. If symptoms do occur, they usually include a vaginal discharge in women, burning when urinating and increased urgency to urinate. Burning when urinating may also occur in men with chlamydia.

How soon do symptoms appear?

When symptoms do occur, they usually occur 1-2 weeks after sexual contact with an infected individual.

How long can a person have this infection?

Chlamydia infection may persist for many months if untreated, even in persons without symptoms. During this time, damage to the reproductive organs can occur in women and the infection can be transmitted to sex partners.

Does past infection with chlamydia make a person immune?

No. Reinfection with chlamydia can occur any time a person is re-exposed.
(Over)

What is the treatment for chlamydia?

Antibiotics such as doxycycline or ofloxacin usually taken for 7 days are often prescribed. Other antibiotics such as azithromycin taken in a single dose can also be prescribed.

What would happen if I had chlamydia and didn't get treatment?

Untreated chlamydia infection, and especially reinfection with chlamydia, is a major cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women, which can prevent a woman from ever having a baby (infertility). PID can also cause scar tissue growth in the fallopian tube, ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus) and chronic pelvic pain. In men, inflammation from the infection can cause pain in the testis (epididymitis) and blockages leading to sterility.

How can I avoid exposure to this infection?

If you don't have a mutually monogamous, steady, or lifelong sex partner, a condom can help protect you from exposure to chlamydia and other sexually transmitted infections.

What should I do if I think I have this infection?

A test for chlamydia that gives accurate, quick results is available at your doctor's office, family planning clinics and STD clinics. Early diagnosis and treatment are necessary to avoid serious complications and spread of this disease. If you test positive, all of your sex partners of the past 3 months or your most recent sex partner should be tested and treated for chlamydia, even if they have no symptoms. Public health professionals from your local health department can help you with the task of informing partners. If your sex partners have the infection and are not treated, you could get infected again if you have sex again with the same partners.

If I have chlamydia, can I have other STDs as well?

Yes. It is possible to have more than one STD at a time. Different STDs are spread in the same manner - through sexual contact (oral, anal, vaginal and penile). In addition, an untreated chlamydia infection can increase your chances of acquiring HIV infection. It is important to make an appointment at your doctor's office or clinic to be examined and tested for STDs as soon as you notice any unusual signs or symptoms or are aware of sexual exposure to someone with an STD.